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REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 10-11, 19-20 and 22-28 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph. Claims 1, 6, 23 and 26 are amended herein to overcome the rejection.

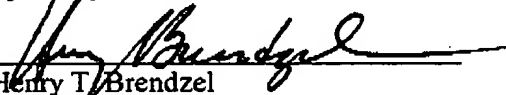
Claims 23-24 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable in view of Tounai et al. Claim 23 is amended to more clearly define the method and, as amended, it is believed that claim 23 (and dependent claims 24) are not obvious in view of Tounai et al.

In the "Response to Arguments" the Examiner pointed out that the limitations of the claim 23 preamble are accorded little patentable weight because the modules recited in the preamble are not also recited in the body of the claims. Amended claim 23 now clearly specifies a method with a step of receiving a stimulus that is carried out in an I/O module (identified as the "second I/O module"), and also specifies a step of controlling another I/O module (identifies as the "first I/O module") to set a service line to a standby mode, and controlling the second I/P module to set a protection line to an active state, where the first and second I/O modules are physically distinct from each other. In Tounai et al, in contradistinction, there is simply one toggle switch (element 4) that switches between a W-line and a P-line. Applicant respectfully submits, therefore, that amended claim 23 is not obvious in view of the Tounai et al reference.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicants respectfully submit that all of the Examiner's rejections have been overcome. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully solicited.

Respectfully,
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Dated: 2/16/04

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